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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 28, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 28, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

BOLGE / EKSPRES: Serdar Seyhan, CHP Adana Provincial Chairman, has come under fire because he kept his seat though the rest of the party's provincial administration was dismissed by party's central administrative board. The party's provincial administration members reportedly strongly supported CHP leader Deniz Baykal during CHP's heated leadership race (January 30), and they are angry that they are being dismissed now. An unspecified CHP party member said that a campaign would be launched to save the CHP in Adana from "the monopoly of the Seyhan family."

EKSPRES / HURRIYET (CUKUROVA) / BOLGE: Atilla Koc, Minister of Tourism and Culture, visited Adana to conduct a series of studies in the city. Koc stated that he wanted to see what could be done to benefit from the tourism potential of Karatas beaches and the Yumurtalik lagoon in Adana on a more local level.

HURRIYET (CUKUROVA): Cukurova University plans to use a former NATO radar base in the Yumurtalik district of Adana as a recreational facility. The place will offer the possibility for students to engage in various outdoor activities such as camping, tracking, paragliding, etc.

BOLGE / CUMHURİYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: Volunteers, including four German students from Hamburg University, are going to visit the sites of military operations in southeastern Turkey as human shields, with the goal of "stopping the war" and conflict in the region. A 25-person group from Istanbul will be arriving at Batman in Sirnak today. A group of people from Adana and Hatay pursuing the same aim set off for Sirnak, as well.

OZGUR GUNDEM: The female inmates in the Diyarbakir E Type prison were banned from seeing their visitors for one month. The inmates were punished because they celebrated Newruz by setting their old clothes on fire, jumping over the fire and chanting. According to the Disciplinary Board of the Prison, the inmates "have disrupted the peaceful and disciplined environment of the prison and set a bad example for the other prisoners."

ZAMAN / EVRENSEL: A village guard and three people were arrested and charged with the killing of Selahattin Gunbey, 13-year-old shepherd who was shot dead in Nusaybin district of Mardin on March 19. According to Ali Candan, Mardin Deputy Governor, local shepherds reportedly could not agree with nomadic shepherds in the area upon the land that their respective flocks of sheep should graze, causing the dispute that resulted in the killing of Gunbey by a volunteer village guard.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Ozgur Gundem draws attention to a visit that the U.S. Embassy's James R. Sopp paid to the MHP (Nationalist Action Party) prior to flag-incident in Mersin. The article alleges that the dismissal of the national chairperson of ultra-nationalist youth centers affiliated with the MHP (ulku ocaklari) was reportedly a sign of division within the party instigated by the visit of the U.S. diplomat. Concerning the heated debate within the party about its relationship with the U.S., some members of MHP reportedly caution against and refrain from taking an anti-American stance. Ozgur Gundem implies in the article that to cover this split of opinion and to show a solid and unified MHP, the flag-incident was "provoked" by the party.

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